

Summary:

Evaluation of the “Speak out!” road safety campaign in Telemark

The road safety campaign “Speak out!” was launched in Telemark county in 1999. The main objective of the campaign is to reduce the number of road accidents among teenagers, in particular those who are between 16 and 19 years old. The campaign appeals to passengers riding in cars to “Speak out!” about dangerous driving, by telling drivers to drive more carefully. It consists of a combination of information and enforcement. Information is given in schools, enforcement has generally taken the form of roadside checks, carried out by the police and officers of the Public Roads Administration together.

The campaign ended temporarily in 2001, but started again during springtime 2004. The “new” campaign has a slightly different content than the previous one, and is planned to continue through the year 2007. Due to the fact that the campaign has been implemented in two time periods, the present report consists of two sections. Section 1 estimates whether the “Speak out!” campaign carried out in the time period 1999-2001 had any effects on the number of killed or injured road users during the period the campaign lasted. Section 2 contains an evaluation of the “Speak out!” campaign that started in 2004. The section includes descriptions of attitudes, behaviour and experiences of risk related to being a passenger in a car with a young driver. In addition, results of how the target group evaluated the campaign is presented.

Summary of section 1

To determine whether the campaign implemented in 1999-2001 had any effect on the number of people killed or injured in road accidents, three types of study were carried out:

- A before-and-after study with a general comparison group. The general comparison group consisted of all other counties in Norway, 18 altogether.
- A before-and-after study with a general comparison group, except counties where the “Speak out!” campaign already had been or still is carried out. This means that the counties of Sogn og Fjordane, Akershus and Hedmark were excluded from the analysis.
- A multivariate analysis (Poisson regression analysis), in which the effects of factors that influence the number of people injured in road accidents, including the “Speak out!” campaign, were estimated statistically.

In all of the three types of study, the effect of the campaign was estimated separately for four target groups:

- a) All killed or injured persons in road traffic accidents in the age group 16-19 years.
- b) All killed or injured car occupants in the age group 16-19 years.
- c) All killed or injured car passengers in the age group 16-19 years.
- d) All killed or injured car drivers in the age group 18-19 years.

The results of the three approaches to evaluation were practically identical: there were no significant reduction in the number of injured or killed persons in the age group 16-19 years in either of the four target groups after the “Speak out!” campaign was implemented.

Summary of section 2:

Section 2 of the report was based on a questionnaire survey carried out among high-school pupils who had experienced a school visit from the “Speak out!” campaign in 2004. The results of the survey revealed that during the last year, about half of the adolescents reported being afraid, having experienced near-accidents or having been involved in race driving when riding with young drivers. About 25 % of the adolescents also reported instances when the driver had been under the influence of alcohol or drugs when they were passengers in the car.

In general, relatively few seemed to fear negative consequences if they were to ask the driver to drive more carefully. Nevertheless, a number of the adolescents reported that they refrained from addressing unsafe driving when they were passengers in cars with young drivers. Further analyses suggest that the propensity to refrain from addressing unsafe driving is most prevalent in situations where there are no other means of transportation available. Still, about half of the respondents reported that they would like to ask drivers to drive more carefully more often than they currently did when feeling unsafe in a car.

The adolescents’ evaluation of the school visit from the “Speak out!” campaign can be summarized as follows:

- In general, the school visit is evaluated more positively than negatively by the adolescents. It is particularly women and those who wish to speak out more frequently who give the most favourable evaluation of the school visit.

- Approximately half of the adolescents report that after the school visit, they are more aware of the risk of being injured as car passengers, feel that it is more acceptable to speak out against unsafe driving, and feel more confident in their ability to influence unsafe drivers.
- 65 percent of the respondents believe that they will address unsafe driving more often as a result of the school visit.

To sum up, the school visit from the “Speak out!” campaign seems to have favourable short-time effects, especially through lowering various barriers that inhibit adolescents from asking drivers to drive more carefully. Whether the campaign started in 2004 actually will change passengers’ behaviour and/or reduce the number of killed or injured car occupants is, however, not yet determined.